

1899 4/1

W. S. Prather, — — — Secretary
J. N. Strong,

Steele Creek, N. C. -- This region has been known to us by fame since our earliest recollection, but not until very recently were we permitted to see it and judge for ourselves. -- Our ~~xxx~~ expectations were great, but like the Queen of Sheba when she visited the King of Israel, I must confess that the half had not been told me. I was favorably disappointed in more than one instance. ~~X~~ The land, although we had expected to find a rich and fertile country, far surpasses our expectation. Here we saw some of the loveliest farms, and did the Catawba overflow Steele Creek, we would say that it was the rival of "the gift of the Nile." The people, although they are proverbial for their hospitality, met and more than met my most sanguine expectation. They can come as near killing one with kindness as any people we have ever seen.

But Steele Creek has many things that make it possess thrilling interest. Its burying ground is full of interest. There the inhabitants of this ~~xxx~~ extensive region, for more than a century, are all sleeping. There are the pastors and the people, the shepherd and his flock, reposing side by side. And there are also many of those who first unsheathed the sword in defence of American Liberty slumbering in quiet. The sound of martial music has died away, and their grand children and great grand children are enjoying the fruits of their toil. The first individual that took up his abode in this resting place was in the year 1751; ~~dixx~~ since that time a vast multitude have gone the way of all the earth. There are now not many short of three thousand bodies lying mouldered and commingled with that almost forgotten stranger. This grave yard is located at Big Steele Creek Church, a part of the present pastoral charge of the Rev. J. B. Watt. One very striking thing which speaks well for the character of the people, is the large amount of grave stones. Few yards can present so ~~xam~~ many. These indicate, both by their almost defaced dates and also by their designs, that the people have long been a civilized and Christian people. The oldest date that we discovered, or rather that we were shown by our friend Col. W. M. G., (to whom we are indebted for much of our information relative to the place), is on the soapstone slab, marking the grave of Sarah Knox. According to this monument, Sarah Knox was born 1699, and died 1765; of her at this date little can be told. More than four ~~xx~~ generations of men have passed away since she first visited this earth, and since she left this world, Steele Creek has passed out of the hands of the British Government; and the despised and mal-treated colonies have ~~xpm~~ sprung up and grown into a mighty nation which bids defiance to the proud banners of her illustrious mother. What mighty changes have taken place since Sarah Knox died! Then Steele Creek was a forest, bearing marks upon its bosom of little else but the tread of Red Men; now it is a ~~x~~ cultivated field, yellow with a golden harvest. Then the wigwam of the savage Indian had not crumbled into ~~dustjx~~ dust, now the whole country is studded with lovely country residences, the abode of peace and quiet.

But in this little inclosure sleep five who had devoted themselves to the ministry of reconciliation.. We notice them according to the dates of their deaths:--Rev. Alexander Moore, Minister of Glasker, in the County Down, Ireland, died April 19th, 1797, in the 44th year of his age. ~~xxxxx~~ We could gather little from his grave stone, but that he had been in the ministry nineteen years, eighteen years of which he had been ordained, a portion of which he spent in America. The second is the Rev. Humphrey Hunter, who died

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21st, 1827, aged 73 years--Rev. Hunter was a prominent man at the time of the Necklenburg Declaration on the 20th of May, 1775. He took an active part in the proceedings, and was a zealous advocate of liberty. About the year 1789, he was licensed by the Presbyterian Church (O. S.) to preach, and the remaining thirty-eight years of his life he spent in preaching the Gospel. The next is the Rev. Francis Pringle, Pastor of Xenia and Sugar Creek congregations, Ohio. Rev. Pringle had become in a bad state of health, and had come South, hoping that it might prove beneficial.--But a wise God had otherwise decreed, and on the 15th of March, 1818, He called him away in the last morning of life and dawn of his ministerial usefulness. He was 29 years old, and 4 years a minister of Christ. The next is Rev. James Pringle, brother of Francis Pringle, ~~who~~ who died on the 28th of October, 1818, aged 30 years, and five years a minister. Rev. James Pringle was pastor of the Associate congregation of Steele Creek, now Associate Reformed and pastoral charge of Rev. J. C. Chalmers. Both of the Rev. Pringles were the sons of Rev. Francis Pringle of Carlisle, Pennsylvania. The remaining one is the Rev. A. L. Watts, who died Jan. the 23rd, 1855, aged 54 years. Of Mr. Watts we knew little, except that he was the pastor of Steele Creek and Pleasant Hill congregations, now the charge of Rev. J. B. Watt, for thirteen years.

Among the other individuals interred in this yard are the relations of the Rev. James McKee, D. D., first pastor of Big Steele Creek church (O.S.P.) The Dr. is buried at Center. We noticed also the grave of James ~~Harris~~ Harris, author of the Plowman's Letters. These letters were addressed by Mr. Harris to his young friends in the ministry, on the subject of Psalmody. A portion of these letters have gone through several editions, and are regarded as the effusions of a master mind, warmed up with a zeal for God's own unmixed word. We have never seen the first edition, but the editions that came into our hands we regard as containing many very valuable truths, uncouthly, perhaps, stated in some instances.

Mr. Harris has a large connection still living in Steele Creek. He died December 12th, 1833, aged 66 years. But the grave yard at Lower Steele Creek or Blackstock church is worthy of our notice. Here lies Hugh Harris, generally known as "uncle Hugh Harris." Few men are farther known and better known than Mr. Harris. The good of the church was the great object of his life.--He was a nephew of James Harris, the author of the Plowman's Letters. He died in the 63rd year of his age, on the 14th of January, 1855. The ashes of another venerable Christian repose in this yard--Alexander Scott. Mr. Scott was a native of Pennsylvania. He was one of the first in establishing the A. R. Church in Steele Creek. In his house, now owned by Mr. W. Boyce, Presbytery often held its meetings, especially its night sessions, when we were few in number. He died on the 10th of March, 1837; having lived three score and ten years. Other individuals might be noticed, but we forbear; and say a word about the Blackstocks church. The exact period we are unable to give, but from facts we are led to conclude that this was a place of preaching as early as 1797. When the church was organized at this place we could not learn, but the first time the sacrament of the Lord's Supper was dispensed was on the 6th day of April, 1817. It may be a matter of interest to many to know who were the individuals by whom it was dispensed; on Saturday Rev. McKnight preached from 1st John, 3d chap. 9th verse, "Whosoever is born of God, doth not commit sin." Sabbath morning Rev. John Hemphill preached from 1st Cor. 6 chap. 17th verse, "But he that is joined unto the Lord is one with Him." Sabbath evening Rev. Charles Strong preached from 1st Peter 1st chap. 1-4 verses, "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ," &c. On Monday, Rev. Wm. Blackstocks preached from Songs of Solomon, 2 chap. and 3d verse--latter clause, "I sat down under his shadow with great delight, and his fruit was sweet unto my taste." On Monday Rev. R. C. Grier, D. D., was

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sized, and so far as we can learn was the first that was baptized at the place. Of this one circumstance Lower Steele Creek may well be proud. For this, if for nothing else, Blackstocks church should be embalmed in the memory of every friend of Erskine College, over which Dr. Grier has presided with a degree of success seldom attained by any man.

But although the 6th of April, 1817, was the first time the sacrament of the Supper was dispensed at this church, and the 7th of the same month and year the first time the sacrament of baptism was administered, we find that early as the year 1815 the Rev. Isaac Grier, D. D., preached at this place; how often we cannot tell, perhaps not more than once a month.

We conclude by saying that our visit to Steele Creek was not only pleasant, but profitable at least to ourselves. We learned some facts that were of great interest, and give them to you to dispose of as may seem best. Steele Creek will long be rememberrd by us, and for Little Steele Creek and Lower Steele Creek, the pastoral charge of Rev. J. C. Chalmers, we cherish the most Christain regards..

R.L.